

Muntons adds innovation to one of the oldest ingredients

Malt is one of the food industry's oldest processed products. The ancient Egyptians knew all about it. The Greeks and the Romans produced it on an industrial scale. Yet like many long familiar products we'd come to take it for granted. Muntons plc has built a hugely successful ingredients business on taking malt and getting the best out of it.

"Malt's been around for so long because it is a completely natural product," says Andrew Fuller, Product Development Technologist at Muntons. "The clever thing is making the best advantage of its fantastic natural characteristics."

Muntons approach to malt has paid off. In the highly competitive malt market, the company reckons it's the 20th in the world rankings by turnover. In terms of producing malt based ingredients for the food industry it's a clear leader.

It's developed a huge range of products. There are light and roasted malt flours which add the taste of malt to bread, helping add value to all sorts of bakery products.

Malted wheat flakes can be used as a bread topping or added to the dough. There's Nuttmalt which Muntons reckon is one of the tastiest malt products around. It's great for adding texture without having to resort to using nuts. There are spray dried and band dried malt extracts designed to add flavour in a convenient way to suit each particular production process.

Muntons produces highly versatile blends for bakers. "We can do this on a bespoke basis," says Andrew Fuller. "We're able to work closely with our customers on New Product Development projects, where the potential warrants this."

The latest example of Muntons fertile stream of ideas is the newly launched Stowgrain Rye, a new range of rye bread concentrates, designed to give the flavour and colour of rye bread while keeping a texture more in tune with British palates.

"Malt is the perfect basis for a product like this" says Andrew Fuller. "It enhances flavour and gives the perfect colour, as well as improving mouth-feel."

In Stowgrain Rye, Muntons have combined malt with premium grains and flours, giving a product that's 75% whole grain. "Stowgrain Rye can be added to a white bread mix to produce something different that people are going to love," says Andrew Fuller. "It's healthy, tasty and versatile."

"Stowgrain mixes are perfect for everyone who makes bread, from the person making one loaf at home in a baking machine, to craft bakers looking for a simple way to offer a wider range, right through to big plant bakers, wanting a straightforward way of satisfying increasing customer demands for healthy, tasty and interesting new products," he says.

"Stowgrain gives you convenience and great taste, but it puts you in control," he says. "We've left out salt and improvers, which means you can add the amount of salt you choose and even limit the salt content for an even healthier product and add your own choice of improver."

Muntons is offering a range of versions of Stowgrain Rye, designed to suit varying needs and



artificial additive."

Malt tastes great and it's a taste many people grew to love as children, but there's a lot more to it than that. "For example, when 5% dried malt extract was added to an ice cream base it was found that expensive natural fruit flavours could be reduced by 10% without any noticeable effect on final taste," explains Andrew Fuller. "There was also a noticeable improvement in mouth-feel. It produced an ice-cream which felt on the tongue just like a much more expensive product."

Malt extract can have the same effect with sauces. "By using malt to enhance flavour you can cut down on the use of some of the most costly ingredients and yet still get the flavour you want." A further advantage was that

the malt helped give the sauce a healthy looking shine. "With these products the amount of malt you use is so low that you don't actually taste it," he says.

Innovation feeds premiumisation

One thing Muntons is thinking long and hard about is premiumisation, an ugly new word to describe something consumers around the world want more and more. "People increasingly want quality and luxury, for which they are willing to pay a higher price, they are not just interested in having what they perceive as an everyday treat, they are now looking for a real indulgence as a

budgets. There is the "Essential" pack, designed to give the Stowgrain taste for those on a budget, the "Gold" pack, designed to target market leading rye breads, and the "Premium" range, with an interesting twist for those who want a really top of the range product.

"The best thing about it is that it's a healthy, natural product, high in protein and B vitamins," Andrew says. "Most adult consumers grew up on malt extract and malted loaves. They'll be pleased to see it on your product's label."

He believes this goes to the heart of why malt is a highly desirable ingredient. "People trust it," he says. "It doesn't have an e-number. It's not an





reward for dealing with the growing pressures of 21st century living," says Andrew Fuller. "That's what's called 'premiumisation'."

"Research recently carried out clearly showed that consumers perceive products with the word malt included in the title to be of a higher quality than non malted equivalents," he says. "They're prepared to pay more. So, which is better - Malt whisky or blended whisky? Malt vinegar or "non-brewed condiment"? A standard white loaf or a malted loaf? And which carries a premium price?" He's sure of the answer to that. "The malted version of course and consumers are happy to pay this premium for a better product; a product that tickles their palate and gets their taste buds tingling."

"We can increase the value of a product by far more than the cost of the malt," he says. "We can extend your brand with new variants which gain shelf space and tease customers away from your competitors' products."

Innovation on environment

Muntons doesn't just limit its innovation to new product development. It aims to be ahead of the game in every aspect of its operations. The environment is another area, where Muntons has proved a winner, with a performance that put has put it in the Sunday Times top 50 environmental companies. Muntons is aiming for a 12% reduction in energy use by 2010. It's already saved

£1 million by putting into place energy saving initiatives. It's driven down its water use to one of the lowest in the industry with a programme to monitor use and re-use as much as possible.

For Andrew Fuller a good environmental performance is a no-brainer. "Every time we get involved with anything environmentally friendly, every time we cut energy use, we save money," he says. "Good environmental performance is about using resources efficiently. That's something every business should be doing."

Innovation in supplier relationships

Muntons is also innovating in the way it deals with its suppliers. "We aim to innovate not only in terms of products, but also in terms of how we work with our customers," says Sarah Philips, Muntons purchasing manager. "We're interested in long term relationships which integrate our new product development with your new product development."

Some of its most important suppliers are farmers. "We have to join up the food chain," says Sarah. "We're dealing with long lead times and enormous risk." The price of barley, the grain used to make malt, can double almost overnight, something that's been known to happen in recent years. "We have to work together to manage the risk" she says. "We need as well to ensure the best possible flow of information all along the production chain from farm to end-user. We need

to be able to predict demand and to give the farmer the right signals, possibly years ahead of when the product is actually needed. At the same time we're running a business with some customers who ring up on any particular day to order product that they want on that day."

There are a huge range of other suppliers and Muntons is working closely with them. "We're increasing the amount of information we give our suppliers and we're expanding and developing the role of our dedicated purchasing team to make sure each supplier deals, as much as possible, with one contact in Muntons," she says. "That way they're always dealing with someone who understands their business."

"So much innovation comes down to sharing information," says Andrew Fuller "We've got the right personnel in place and we've got great facilities, with more money going into better new product facilities which are opening soon. But without the right information flow there's a limit to what experts in labs can do. The vital role for innovation is not just doing something new for the sake of it. It's doing something new to give a consumer a product he or she will want, even if they'd never have thought of it before. It's doing something new to make our business and the businesses of our customers and our suppliers work better. It's vital for our long term survival as a business and as an industry. Without innovation we're going nowhere."



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